As Delivered

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk

Remarks to Interactive Dialogue on report on Venezuela

Geneva, 26 June 2026

Mr. Vice-President,

Permítanme comenzar expresando mis más sinceras condolencias a quienes han perdido a familiares y seres queridos en los terremotos ocurridos el miércoles. Mis pensamientos están con las personas que resultaron heridas y con sus familias, que hoy enfrentan dolor, incertidumbre y un camino difícil por delante. Nuestra solidaridad con el pueblo de Venezuela en este difícil momento.

Mr.Vice-President,

The past year has seen some important changes to the human rights situation in Venezuela.

Since 1 May 2025, my Office has confirmed the release of more than 1,200 people, although many still have conditions attached to their freedom. Most of them were detained in the post-election period of July 2024.

My report notes some 40 cases of arbitrary detention during 2025, including opposition politicians, human rights defenders, journalists, union members and humanitarians.

Access to justice and accountability remained constrained. The conviction of eight police officers on charges related to killings during security operations is an important step. However, no progress was reported on investigating deaths during protests in 2014, 2017, 2019 and 2024. Nor have the authorities opened investigations into alleged human rights violations by the armed forces during operation *Zaraza* in 2024, including the killing of 30 people.

My Office continues to receive reports of denial of due process, including through lack of access to lawyers and files.

The economic situation continued to worsen during the reporting period, and cuts to humanitarian funding took a serious toll.

The cost of the family food basket increased by more than 700 percent in bolivars between March 2025 and 2026. More than five million Venezuelans need urgent food assistance. Salaries remain low, while inflation is high and volatile. The new standard urban transport fare of 140 bolivars exceeds the monthly salary of public sector workers.

Most Venezuelans have very limited access to healthcare. While the United States of America has recently granted import licenses in certain economic sectors, sanctions continue to restrict the availability of medical supplies.

Mr. Vice-President,

This year has seen a number of positive steps.

According to Government figures, more than 8,000 people have benefited from the Amnesty Law adopted in February 2026, including 314 who were released from detention. However, implementation of the law needs to be fully compliant with international human rights law.

This year has also seen a marked increase in public protests. Although no major incidents were reported, the presence of the security forces, and the intimidation of protesters, unionists, journalists and human rights defenders, continue to create a climate of fear.

Sustained progress requires consistency and transparency. It also requires strengthened independent oversight of detention centres. Hundreds of people remain arbitrarily detained, with persistent reports of deaths in custody, ill-treatment, unwarranted use of force, lack of medical care, and poor conditions.

The announcement of the death of Victor Hugo Quero Navas, who was forcibly disappeared in January 2025, and his late mother's long search for him, prompted a public outcry. The official investigation provided no information on Mr. Quero's enforced disappearance.

Despite the recognition by senior officials of the need to overhaul the Anti-Hate law, no progress has been made toward repealing or amending legislation that restricts civic space.

Mr. Vice-President,

Official announcements about reforms to the Venezuelan justice system are welcome. These reforms, if implemented, are a crucial opportunity to bring institutions and practices into line with international standards. These efforts should include reform of the security sector, with effective vetting and oversight of the security forces; the meaningful participation of civil society; and concrete steps to ensure accountability for serious human rights violations.

The nationwide consultation process on these reforms can be a significant step, if it is inclusive and participatory.

The selection of judges needs to ensure their independence and be merit-based and transparent. Disciplinary measures need to be in line with international standards.

The closure of the Helicoide prison sends an important message. However, the transfer of its inmates to facilities with even poorer conditions, in some cases without notifying their relatives or legal representatives, is a serious concern.

Mr. Vice-President,

My Office in Venezuela is engaging with the national authorities and gradually resuming its activities, with the aim of discharging its full mandate. This provides a valuable platform for advancing the protection of human rights, technical cooperation, capacity-building, and dialogue between stakeholders, as part of broader efforts to build trust and confidence.

Our interactions with local partners, including civil society, are essential to understanding the evolving situation and needs, identifying gaps, and tailoring our support. They help to foster constructive channels between and among communities and authorities.

I have shared a set of Confidence-Building measures, centred on human rights, with the Venezuelan authorities. Broader progress will require structural changes to address grievances and meet people's basic needs.

It will be essential to establish the truth, find appropriate remedies for those who have suffered, guarantee that there is no repetition of serious human rights violations, and create conditions for reconciliation. This will require steps to rebuild trust in state institutions, through meaningful consultation with civil society, victims, and their families. Expanding civic space is also crucial.

Regular and unhindered access to all places of detention by independent and impartial entities is a priority. My Office stands ready to provide technical support on improving conditions.

Human rights and transparency must be at the heart of Venezuela's economic recovery. People need to be at the centre of financial decisions, and revenues, including those from the oil, gas and critical mineral sectors, must benefit all Venezuelans.

The authorities need to consult and cooperate in good faith with Indigenous Peoples, through their own representative institutions, to obtain their prior, free, and informed consent for all operations and activities that impact them.

I would also like to reiterate the disproportionate impact of broad sectoral sanctions on the human rights of Venezuelans and call again for them to be reassessed and lifted.

I urge the Venezuelan authorities to cooperate with international human rights and accountability mechanisms, including the Fact-Finding Mission established by the Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court.

Mr. Vice-President,

Finally, I commend the swift response by many countries to the devastating earthquakes.

I encourage the international community to provide sustained and scaled-up support if needed, prioritizing the rights and dignity of those most affected.

Thank you.